



Game Feed
Trade
Association



IMPORTANT

JOINT COMMUNICATION: 15 May 2017

BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURE- PRESCRIBING ANTIBIOTICS IN GAMEBIRDS

The Background

There is worldwide concern about the increased resistance of many infections to antibiotics (ABs). It is estimated that unless we act now, human deaths associated with anti-microbial resistance could rise to 10 million a year by 2050; more than currently die of cancer. Without AB cover, surgical operations might again become as hazardous as they were in history. So governments everywhere are now committing to bringing down AB use dramatically, keeping precious medicines back for cases of real need, whether in humans or animals.

The UK Government has said that securing big reductions in AB use is essential, both in human medicine and animal husbandry. The NHS already has a target of halving inappropriate AB prescribing by 2020 and each UK livestock sector is now working on its own target and plan for cutting AB use. The gamebird sector is no exception. We have to declare a sector reduction target to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) by October 2017.

If voluntary reduction across all sectors does not work, legal restrictions will almost certainly be imposed. On the other hand, if we make good progress in putting our own house in order, we will gain credit for playing our part in responding to a really serious societal need.

The Initiative

In response to the very serious situation described above, representatives of the gamebird industry have recently come together with poultry and gamebird vets and professional veterinary bodies to produce this document. It re-affirms in clear and concise language how the prescribing of antibiotics for gamebirds should be carried out.

RUMA (the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance), which has produced guidelines for the responsible use of ABs in poultry and gamebirds and is now assisting all livestock sectors with AB reduction, endorses this initiative. The gamebird veterinary practices listed at the end of this document are fully on board too.

Together we urge everyone in the gamebird sector to follow the best practice procedure bullet points below. Each one is required either by existing law, codes of practice or by professional best practice agreements.

They may not all have been adhered to in the past but they **MUST** be followed now and in future.

Best Practice Procedure for Antibiotic Prescribing in Gamebirds

- For the purposes of prescribing, all kept gamebirds must be “under the care” of a qualified veterinary surgeon. This means the vet has been given responsibility for the health of the flock by the owner. That vet must see the flock immediately before prescribing or have visited recently enough to make a diagnosis and prescribe¹.
- Correct husbandry and management should always be in place and will reduce the need for medication and treatment².
- Bird keepers must talk to their vet to establish whether there is a need to prescribe ABs *before* asking a feed company to compound rations containing medication³.
- Medicines prescribed under the ‘cascade’ system (which covers most of those used in gamebirds) can only be administered by a vet or someone directed by him or her and acting under his or her responsibility⁴.
- ‘Cascade’ medication is “in particular for the avoidance of unnecessary suffering”⁵.
- ABs must always be prescribed in response to a specific need arising in the birds in question. They should never be used as a matter of habit or a substitute for good bird management⁶.
- Where prescription of ABs is indicated, it must be for specific circumstances and for the exact amount necessary to resolve the problem⁷.
- Owners should be advised on correct administration and storage of products, and appropriate withdrawal periods⁸.
- ABs must never be wasted or allowed to pollute the environment. Unused ABs must not be flushed to the sewer and should be disposed of as pharmaceutical waste⁹.
- Any antibiotic use MUST be recorded¹⁰.

It follows from the above that:

- **ABs for incorporation into gamebird feed should not be prescribed at all unless the birds in question have been visited by the vet responsible for them, or a clinical assessment of birds has been undertaken by the vet (e.g post mortem examination) and a need to prescribe AB has been established. Any departure from this general principle of responsible prescribing requires specific justification.**

Whatever your involvement, please make sure that this best practice procedure is always followed. The retention of necessary medicines for treating gamebirds and the future of gamebird rearing and shooting are all dependent on a positive and universal response. Thank you.

¹ Veterinary Medicines Regulations, 2005 and RCVS Guidance on ‘Animals [under the care](#)’.

² Animal Welfare Act, 2006 and Government Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes, 2009.

³ Medicated Feedstuffs Prescriptions Code of Practice, 2014 (Agreed by VMD,BVA,AIC,NFU and RCVS)

⁴ Veterinary Medicines Regulations, 2013.

⁵ Ditto.

⁶ [BVA responsible use of anti-microbials in veterinary practice 7 point plan](#)

⁷ Ditto.

⁸ Ditto.

⁹ Environmental Protection Act, 1990 and Hazardous Waste Regulations, 2005.

¹⁰ VMD Code of Practice on the Responsible Use of Medicines on the Farm, 2014.

The *BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURE for Prescribing Antibiotics in Gamebirds* described in this communication is supported by all the organisations whose logos appear at the top of this document and also by all the Veterinary Practices listed below:

Avivets

Bishopton Veterinary Group

Chipping Norton Veterinary Hospital

Crowshall Veterinary Services LLP

Dalton's Game Consultancy

Garth Veterinary Practice

Hafren Veterinary Group

Howells Veterinary Services Ltd

Manor Court Vet Centre

Minster Poultry Vets

NorCal Vets

Poultry Health Centre (David Parsons)

Retford Poultry Partnership Ltd

Sandhill Veterinary Services

Severn Edge Vets

Slate Hall Veterinary Practice

South Downs Veterinary Consultancy

St David's Game Bird Services

Wood Vet Group

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